

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

SBAC Weekly Update

Issue 51

Week ending Friday, February 10, 2012

Top News This Week

- IT architecture materials available and a three-part webinar series launched
- New external website to launch next week
- Consortium's quarterly report now available

The SMARTER Balanced Weekly Update is an email sent each Friday to keep Consortium members and collaborators informed of new developments and upcoming events. The Update is widely distributed to Consortium state leads, work group members, Consortium and WestEd staff, and Consortium advisors, partners, and service providers. State members should feel free to share information in the Update with those who are interested in the Consortium's work.

Please note that embedded links in the Update sometimes direct readers to the Consortium's internal website, available only to Consortium members. If you are a state employee in a Consortium state and need access to material on this website, please contact sbac@wested.org.

From the Executive Director

Greetings. This week we hosted the first SMARTER Balanced Work Group/Contractor Collaboration Conference in San Antonio. The event brought together state leads and work groups to meet with contractors and collaborate on key issues facing the Consortium.

Idaho state lead and Executive Committee Co-Chair Carissa Miller kicked off the conference by reminding us how much has been accomplished since October 2010. She urged everyone to take a moment to recognize our successes, including the release of nine RFPs and the awarding of seven contracts.

We made a commitment to bring work groups together because we recognize the value in meeting face-to-face—not only because it is often more productive, but also because it builds stronger connections between member states. As one person said, "It's time well spent." Carissa also noted that one of the biggest benefits of participating in the Consortium is the opportunity to share knowledge with colleagues in other states.

To that end, the conference provided extensive opportunities for cross-work group collaboration. At a report-out session, representatives from each work group provided a summary of their discussions, decisions, and outstanding questions. One work group member noted that even though these deep-dive discussions sometime raise more tough questions, she is more committed than ever to "trust in the process." Another participant described the impact of the conference this way: "The energy is great, and the opportunity to build relationships will see us over the finish line."

Utah state lead and Executive Committee Co-Chair Judy Park spoke about the importance of outreach to build support and awareness of Smarter Balanced. At the conference, we distributed new Consortium fact sheets and materials that provide an update on our work and reflect our focus on developing assessments that help prepare students for college and career. Next week, we will launch a redesigned website that will serve as a central communications hub for the Consortium and will provide more ways to connect with our partners and stakeholders.

Our goal is to hold similar conferences twice per year in connection with existing meetings. With the success of this week's event, we are already beginning to plan the next conference in late summer. JW

Announcements

IT Architecture materials and webinar series—SMARTER Balanced is hosting a three-part webinar series in collaboration with Measured Progress, the Software and Information Industry Association (SIIA), and the Association of Test Publishers (ATP) to raise awareness about the SMARTER Balanced information

technology architecture. During the first webinar, on February 6, Measured Progress and SMARTER Balanced project leaders provided an overview of the architecture blueprint and described its implications for SMARTER Balanced and the larger assessment industry. Having provided the context, vision, and goals in the first webinar, the subsequent webinars will include detailed discussions with the industry partners regarding technical attributes of the proposed system. Webinar invitees will be contacted directly.

The IT architecture and requirements are now available online:

<http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx> (refer to section titled "Information Technology Systems Architecture").

New external website—Next week, SMARTER Balanced will launch a new external website at www.smarterbalanced.org. The site will help showcase the innovative work of the Consortium and provide more frequent updates on activities, milestones, and events. Visitors will be able to explore an interactive timeline of activities by school year, download new fact sheets and resources, and sign up for a monthly e-newsletter. In addition, new templates and materials will be available on the collaboration site beginning February 14.

Upcoming Events

Chiefs In-Person meeting—Chiefs and state leads: The next in-person meeting of the member state Chiefs will occur on Friday, February 24, in Denver. Please see separate emails from sbac@wested.org regarding logistical information.

Resources

Year Two, First Quarter Project Report available—The quarterly project report for the period ending December 31, 2011, can be found at <http://www.smarterbalanced.org/Resources.aspx>. The report details the Consortium's progress in key areas and priorities for the next three months.

Link to the Technology Readiness Tool webinar recording—The State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) hosted a webinar on January 30 to provide additional information about the IT readiness effort and answer questions. To access a recording of the webinar, please go to: <https://cisco.webex.com/ciscosales/lsr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=58072087&rKey=2b2bb44ed08bb516>.

Report on engaging higher education in new assessments available—A new report from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) identifies the conditions that can help build consensus between state K-12 and postsecondary systems. It also makes recommendations for meaningful involvement by higher education in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards and assessments, which will inform our efforts to engage the postsecondary field. The report is available at <http://www.nchems.org/pubs/detail.php?id=146>.

Collaboration Site—Consortium members: The Consortium uses an internal collaboration site hosted by Google Docs to enable information sharing and collaboration among the member states. If you are a state employee in a Consortium state and need access to material on this website, please contact sbac@wested.org.

ESEA Flexibility Waiver support—State Chiefs and state leads: A document designed to support SMARTER Consortium states applying for ESEA Flexibility is now available. The document is specifically designed to support a state's answer to question 1.C "Develop and Administer Annual, Statewide, Aligned, High-Quality Assessments that Measure Student Growth" and could be included in its entirety as a complete document or a state could use portions of the document for their application. Please note that the third paragraph of the document must be updated with specific state information, including the state's role in the Consortium. The document is available on the internal SMARTER Balanced website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/document-library>, and if you require a copy of your state's signed Memorandum of Understanding, an electronic scan can be sent via email to the SMARTER Balanced state lead within 24 hours of receiving the request.

Relevant news items—State members: Weekly selections of news items relevant to the Consortium are available on the internal SMARTER Balanced website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/news-archive>.

Prior versions of the Weekly Update—State members: Previous SBAC Weekly Updates are available on the internal SMARTER Balanced website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/communications/weekly-update-archive>.

SMARTER Balanced meeting minutes—State members: Agendas and minutes from previously held meetings are available on the internal SMARTER Balanced website at <https://sites.google.com/a/smarterbalanced.org/home/meetings>.

Answering Open Questions

Each week we will address a question or two on the minds of Consortium members. Send your questions to sbac@wested.org.

When will SMARTER Balanced assessments be implemented in schools?

In our application to the U.S. Department of Education, we committed to a timeline that would deliver the assessments to states by the 2014-15 school year. As we began our work, we took specific steps to ensure that we meet this goal. Our summative assessment Master Work Plan outlines the development of each component of the assessment system. We update the work plan regularly to reflect changes in the status of contracts and decisions made by Governing States. However, our overall timeline remains the same, and we are on track with our goal of providing a fully functioning assessment system to schools for the 2014-15 school year.

Over the next two years, SMARTER Balanced will conduct a pilot test (spring 2013) and a broader field test (spring 2014) to prepare for the launch of the assessment system. Details about participation in these tests will be forthcoming.

--

SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium

WestEd—Project Management Partner

sbac@wested.org

aa_12